

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office Action mailed October 1, 2003 has been reviewed and carefully considered. Claims 1-4 were pending, claim 1 being independent. Those claims have been cancelled and replaced with new claims 5-20, claim 5 being independent.

Claims 1-4 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by United States Patent No. 5,155,787 (Carpenter, *et al.*). Reconsideration of this rejection, insofar as it may apply against new claims 5-20, is respectfully solicited.

The instant invention is directed to an optical connector for physically coupling two sets of optical fiber wires with each other. Each set has a plurality of optical fiber wires. The claimed connector includes a plug and a coupling member adapted to be fitted together. The plug has a bottom plate 15, a top plate 16, and a seat 13 for supporting a first one of the pluralities of optical fiber wires between the bottom plate and the top plate. The first plurality of optical fiber wires is cantilevered to extend beyond the front end of the seat.

The coupling member 12, when fitted with the plug, is sandwiched between the bottom and top plates, thereby accurately establishing the relative spatial relationship between the plug and the coupling member, in particular the vertical spatial relationship. Since the first plurality of optical fiber wires 18, having an axis 25, is supported by the seat 13, it is possible to reliably set the degree of offset between an axis 24 of a receiving portion 21 in the coupling member and axis 25 of the first plurality of optical fiber wires 18 by adjusting the height of seat 13.

Claims 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 recite the additional limitation that the first plurality of optical fiber wires is fixed on the rear end of the seat. Thus, the bending direction and bending amount of the first plurality of optical fiber wires 18 can be controlled and variations between characteristics of the optical fiber wires due to the bending can be prevented.

Carpenter, *et al.* neither teach nor suggest an optical coupling as claimed. Specifically, Carpenter, *et al.* disclose an optical fiber splice element having porches 84 with ramps 88 for connecting two pluralities of optical fiber wires. The splice element disclosed by Carpenter, *et al.* is a unitary element 18 having two plates 74 and 76 which are foldably connected about a hinge (groove 70 - col. 4, lines 38-04). Carpenter, *et al.* do not disclose the use of two elements adapted to be fitted together (such as the claimed plug having top and bottom plates sandwiching the coupling member therebetween), each element supporting one of the pluralities of optical fiber wires to be connected.

Carpenter, *et al.* also fail to disclose the use of a receiving portion with a guide region such as claimed. They would be unnecessary since the unitary splice element disclosed by Carpenter, *et al.* does not permit the relative movement toward each other of components carrying the optical fiber wires, as is the case with the claimed plug and coupling member. Plates 74 and 76 of Carpenter, *et al.* are hingedly connected, but they do not permit any movement toward each other for fitting them together.

Furthermore, nothing in the Carpenter, *et al.* patent shows, teaches or suggests that a coupling member could be sandwiched between the top and bottom plates of the plug. Since the two hinged plates 74, 76 taught by Carpenter, *et al.* are pivotably mounted to one another parallel to their longitudinal axes, the reference does not show that one of the plates could be sandwiched between any two elements.

In addition, Carpenter, *et al.* do not teach the claimed offset between the axes of the receiving portion and the first plurality of optical fiber wires when the first plurality of optical

fiber wires is about to be inserted into the receiving portion. There would be no reason for Carpenter, *et al* to have these axes offset in this manner.

Thus, Carpenter, *et al* fail to show, teach or suggest the invention as claimed in claim 1. In particular, claim 1 is clearly not anticipated by the applied reference under 35 USC 102. Moreover, the multiple and substantial differences between the claimed invention and this reference render the claimed invention clearly unobvious and, thus, allowable under 35 USC 103.

For these reasons, and there being no further grounds for objection or rejection, it is respectfully submitted that the invention as claimed is neither taught nor suggested by Carpenter, *et al*. Consequently, withdrawal of the pending rejection and allowance of the present application are appropriate.

Early and favorable action is therefore respectfully solicited.

It is believed that no fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application. However, if any fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,

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